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Appl. No. 10/035,159

Amendment dated March 20, 2009

Response to Office Action dated December 22, 2008

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application. By the present amendment claims 1, 13, 17, 23, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39 and 43 are amended, claim 44 is added and claim 16 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer as to the subject matter contained therein. Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-15, 17-19, 23-31, 33, 35, 37-40, 43 and 44 are pending.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (*Currently Amended*) An information communication apparatus, provided in a digital complex machine, which is set to be capable of performing communication with outside via a network, comprising:

an information generating section for selecting an article suitable for maintenance of the digital complex machine, so as to generate purchase information which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating section presumes a time when life of the article required for maintenance of the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by the communication section and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article; and

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a communication section for opening the purchase information to plural dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and for receiving sales information, which indicate sales conditions of said article, from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to inform the sales information to a user[[]]; and

an auction server including a server controlling section set to inform a specific wholesale shop, which has the article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value,

wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user.

Claim 2. (*Original*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein:

said communication section is set to open the purchase information to the plural dealers, and to transmit the purchase information to an auction server which collects the sales information from the respective dealers, and

said communication section is set to receive the sales information of the respective dealers, from the auction server.

Claim 3. (*Original*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 2, wherein:

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said auction server is set to determine a dealer as a successful bidder in accordance with the sales condition transmitted from the respective dealers, and

said auction server is set to inform the communication section of the successful bidder that has been determined.

Claim 4. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein said information generating section is set to generate purchase information, which indicates that purchase of an expendable is required in the digital complex machine.

Claim 5. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 4, wherein said information generating section is set to generate the purchase information, which indicates that the purchase of the expendable is required in the digital complex machine, when an amount of the expendable, left in the digital complex machine, becomes less than a predetermined value.

Claim 6. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein said information generating section is set to generate purchase information, which indicates that purchase of a replacement part is required in the digital complex machine.

Claim 7. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication

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apparatus set forth in claim 6, wherein said information generating section is set to generate the purchase information, which indicates that the purchase of the replacement part is required in the digital complex machine, when deterioration of the replacement part of the user device becomes more than a predetermined value.

Claim 8. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein said information generating section is set to generate purchase information, which indicates that a regular examination is required with respect to the digital complex machine.

Claim 9. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein said information generating section is set so that the purchase information includes specifying information to specify the digital complex machine.

Claim 10. (*Original*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein said information generating section is set to stop generating the purchase information in accordance with an instruction of the use.

Claim 11. (*Original*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein said information generating section is set so that the purchase information includes information that causes a dealer to be determined as a successful bidder.

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Claim 12. (*Original*) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein said communication section informs the sales information by displaying the sales information.

Claim 13. (*Currently Amended*) A service providing system comprising an information communication apparatus and an auction server, wherein:

said information communication apparatus, provided in a digital complex machine, which is set to perform communication with outside via a network, includes:

an information generating section for selecting an article suitable for maintenance of the digital complex machine, so as to generate purchase information which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating section presumes a time when life of the article required for maintenance of the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by the communication section and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article; and

a communication section for opening the purchase information to plural

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dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and for receiving sales information, which indicate sales conditions of said article, from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to inform the sales information to a user, and

the communication section being set to open the purchase information to the plural dealers, and to transmit the purchase information to the auction server which collects the sales information from the respective dealers, and

the communication section further being set to receive the sales information of the respective dealers from the auction server,

wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user, and

said auction server includes:

a server communication section for performing communication with the information communication apparatus;

an opening section for opening the purchase information, transmitted from the information communication apparatus, to the plural dealers;

a collecting section for collecting the sales information from the respective dealers; and

a server controlling section for transmitting the sales information, that has been collected, via the server communication section to the information communication apparatus, wherein

said server controlling section is set to inform a specific wholesale shop, which has an article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction

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to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value.

Claim 14. (*Original*) The service providing system set forth in claim 13, wherein:

said server controlling section of said auction server is set to determine a dealer as a successful bidder in accordance with the sales information transmitted from the respective dealers, and

said server controlling section is set to inform the successful bidder to the communication section of the information communication apparatus.

Claim 15. (*Original*) The service providing system set forth in claim 14, wherein said server controlling section is set to avoid determining a dealer, who transmits sales information indicative of a sales condition which does not satisfy a predetermined standard value, as the successful bidder.

Claim 16. (*Canceled*)

Claim 17. (*Currently Amended*) The service providing system set forth in claim [[16]] 15, wherein the information generating section of the information communication apparatus is set so that the purchase information includes information that causes the dealer to be determined as the successful bidder, and

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said standard value is set in accordance with said information that causes the dealer to be determined as the successful bidder.

Claim 18. (*Previously Presented*) The service providing system set forth in claim 13, wherein said opening section is set to transmit the purchase information, received from the information communication apparatus, and the sales information, received from the dealers, to a maker of the digital complex machine.

Claim 19. (*Original*) The service providing system set forth in claim 13, wherein said communication section informs the sales information by displaying the sales information.

Claims 20-22. (*Canceled*)

Claim 23. (*Currently Amended*) An information communication method for transmitting information of a digital complex machine via a network to outside , and for receiving information transmitted from the outside, comprising:

an information generating process for selecting an article suitable for maintenance of the digital complex machine, so as to generate purchase information, which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating process presumes a time when life of the article required for maintenance of the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time

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calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by a communication informing process and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article; and

a communication informing process for opening the purchase information to plural dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and for receiving sales information, which indicate sales conditions of said article, from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to inform the sales information to a user; and

an auction server controlling process for informing a specific wholesale shop, which has an article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value,

wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user.

Claim 24. (*Original*) The information communication method set forth in claim 23, wherein:

said communication informing process is set to open the purchase

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information to the plural dealers, and to transmit the purchase information to an auction server which collects the sales information from the respective dealers, and

said communication display process is further set to receive the sales information of the respective dealers from the auction server.

Claim 25. (*Original*) The information communication method set forth in claim 24, wherein:

said auction server is set to determine a dealer as a successful bidder in accordance with the sales information transmitted from the respective dealers, and

said communication informing process is set to be informed of the successful bidder determined by the auction server.

Claim 26. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication method set forth in claim 23, wherein said information generating process generates purchase information, which indicates that purchase of an expendable is required in the digital complex machine.

Claim 27. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication method set forth in claim 26, wherein said information generating process generates the purchase information, which indicates that the purchase of the expendable is required, when an amount of the expendable, left in the digital complex machine, becomes less than a predetermined value.

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Claim 28. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication method set forth in claim 23, wherein said information generating process generates purchase information, which indicates that purchase of a replacement part is required in the digital complex machine.

Claim 29. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication method set forth in claim 28, wherein said information generating process generates the purchase information, which indicates that the purchase of the replacement part is required, when deterioration of the replacement part of the digital complex machine becomes more than a predetermined value.

Claim 30. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication method set forth in claim 23, wherein said information generating process generates purchase information, which indicates that a regular examination is required with respect to the digital complex machine.

Claim 31. (*Currently Amended*) An information communication method for transmitting information of a digital complex machine via a network to outside, and for receiving information, transmitted from the outside, comprising:

an information generating process for selecting an article suitable for maintenance of the digital complex machine, so as to generate purchase information which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance

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with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating process presumes a time when life of the article required for maintenance of the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by a communication process and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article; and

a communication informing process for opening the purchase information to plural dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and for receiving sales information, which indicate sales conditions of said article, from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to inform the sales information to a user[[],]; and

an auction server controlling process for informing a specific wholesale shop, which has an article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value,

wherein said information generating process and said communication display process are executed by a computer, and wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by

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the user.

Claim 32. (*Canceled*)

Claim 33. (*Currently Amended*) An information communication program which actuates a computer as an information generating section, ~~and as a communication section, and an auction server controller section,~~ said computer being installed in an information communication apparatus, provided in a digital complex machine, which is set to be capable of performing communication with outside via a network, wherein:

said information generating section selects an article suitable for maintenance of the digital complex machine, so as to generate purchase information, which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating section presumes a time when life of the article required for maintenance of the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by a communication section and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article, ~~and~~

said communication section opens the purchase information to plural

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dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and receives sales information which indicate sales conditions of said article, from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to inform the sales information to a user, and

said auction server controller section informing a specific wholesale shop, which has an article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value,

wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user.

Claim 34. (*Canceled*)

Claim 35. (*Currently Amended*) A computer-readable recording medium which stores an information communication program which actuates a computer as an information generating section, ~~and as a communication display section,~~ and an auction server controller section, said computer being installed in an information communication apparatus, provided in a digital complex machine, which is set to be capable of performing communication with outside via a network, wherein:

said information generating section selects an article suitable for maintenance of the digital complex machine, so as to generate purchase information, which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance

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with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating section presumes a time when life of the article required for maintenance of the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by a communication section and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article, ~~and~~

said communication section opens the purchase information to plural dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and receives sales information, which indicate sales conditions of said article, from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to inform the sales information to a user, and

said auction server controller section informing a specific wholesale shop, which has an article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value,

wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user.

Claim 36. (*Canceled*)

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Claim 37. (*Currently Amended*) An information communication apparatus, provided in a digital complex machine, which is set to be capable of performing communication with outside, comprising:

an information generating section for generating device information concerning the digital complex machine, including information regarding an article required for said digital complex machine, said information generating section presumes a time when life of the article required by digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by a communication section and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article;

a communication section for transmitting the device information to plural dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and for receiving reply information with respect to the device information, during an auction period; and

an auction server including a server controlling section set to inform a specific wholesale shop, which has the article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value; and

a display section for displaying the reply information,
wherein, generation of device information, and transmission of device information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user.

Claim 38. (*Previously Presented*) The information communication apparatus computer-readable recording medium set forth in claim 37, wherein:

said information generating process generates purchase application information, which indicates that purchase of an article concerning the digital complex machine is required, as the device information, and

said communication process is set to open the purchase application information to plural dealers, and to transmit the purchase application information to an auction organization that determines a successful bidder in accordance with sales information transmitted by bidders with respect to the purchase application information, and said communication section is further set to receive auction result information which includes successful bidder information and bid information, as reply information, from the auction organization.

Claim 39. (*Currently Amended*) An information communication method for transmitting information of a digital complex machine via a network to outside, and for receiving information, transmitted from the outside, said method making a computer execute (a) an information generating process for selecting an article suitable for maintenance of the digital complex machine so as to generate

purchase information which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating process presumes a time when life of the article required for maintenance of the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by a communication process and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article, and (b) a communication display process for opening the purchase information to plural dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and for receiving sales information, which indicate sales conditions of said article, from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to display the sales information to the user, wherein said communication display process is set to open the purchase information to the plural dealers, and to transmit the purchase information to an auction server which collects the sales information from the respective dealers, and said communication display process is further set to receive the sales information of the respective dealers from the auction server, and (c) an auction server controlling process for informing a specific wholesale shop, which has an article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value,

wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user.

Claim 40. (*Original*) The information communication method set forth in claim 39, wherein said auction server is set to determine a dealer as a successful bidder in accordance with the sales conditions transmitted from the respective dealers, and said communication display process is set to be informed of the successful bidder determined by the auction server.

Claim 41. (*Canceled*)

Claim 42. (*Canceled*)

Claim 43. (*Currently Amended*) An information communication apparatus, provided in a digital complex machine, which is set to be capable of performing communication with outside, comprising:

an information generating section for selecting an article suitable for the digital complex machine, so as to generate purchase information, which indicates that purchase of the article is required, in accordance with status of the digital complex machine, said information generating section presumes a time when life of the article required for the digital complex machine will end, and generates the purchase information at a time calculated by subtracting from the presumed time a

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purchase time required between transmission of the purchase information by a communication section and reception of a delivery of the article, which purchase time includes an auction period, a period of business discussions between the user and the dealer, and a period required between delivery of the article by the dealer and reception of delivery of the article; ~~and~~

a communication section for transmitting the purchasing information to plural dealers in order to hold a reverse auction, and for receiving sales information according to sales conditions of said article from respective dealers, during an auction period, so as to display the sales information to a user[[,]]; and

an auction server including a server controlling section set to inform a specific wholesale shop, which has the article corresponding to the purchase information, of an instruction to provide the article to the user of the digital complex machine, in a case where there is no dealer that has transmitted sales information indicative of a sales condition which satisfies a standard value,

wherein, selection of the article to be purchased, generation of purchase information, and transmission of purchase information are automatically performed by said apparatus without instruction by the user.

Claim 44. (New) The information communication apparatus set forth in claim 1, wherein:

said information generating section regularly measures a decrease of life of the maintenance article so as to presume, in accordance with a measurement result, a time of life when the article required for the maintenance of the device will end.